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A D D R E S S

BEFORE THE

WHIG AND CONSERVATIVE CITIZENS

OF SCHENECTADY COUNTY,

AT UNION HALL,

DECEMBER 30th, 1839.

BY JOHN S. VAN RENSSLAER, ESQ.
of Albany.

S C H E N E C T A D Y :

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SCHENECTADY, DEC. 31, 1839.

JOHN S. VAN RENSSELAER, Esq.

Esteemed Sir—We the undersigned, a committee of Whig and Conservative citizens, from among those who listened with deep gratification to your interesting Address, at Union Hall, last evening—solicit from you a copy of the same for publication, under the impression that its valuable data and principles, if thrown before the public, may be the means of accomplishing permanent good to the cause of freedom, with which Harrison and Tyler are intimately identified.

From yours, very respectfully,

DANL. J. TOLL.

WM. McCAMUS,

JAMES FROST,

STEPHEN H. JOHNSON,

T. L. THOMPSON,

JOHN LASSELLS,

JOHN BROTHERSON,

LEVI SABIN,

H. C. VAN VORST,

JOHN SANDERS.

ALBANY, JAN. 3d, 1840.

Gentlemen—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your very unexpected and complimentary note of the 31st ult.

I would have complied with its request at an earlier period, if my remarks to the highly respectable meeting of the Whigs and Conservatives of the city of Schenectady, had been reduced to writing in any other shape, than the mere heads of what I intended to say.

Enclosed is, in substance, a copy of the address I made, which I place at your disposal, to publish or withhold, as you may judge best calculated to aid the cause of freedom, and reach the end we aim at, the defeat of bad measures and unworthy rulers.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN S. VAN RENSSELAER.

To Messrs. Danl. J. Toll, Wm. McCamus, James Frost, Stephen H. Johnson, T. L. Thompson, John Lassells, John Brotherson, Levi Sabin, H. C. Van Vorst, John Sanders, Schenectady.

ADDRESS.

I obey your call, gentlemen, not to make a set speech, but to unite with you in assenting to the nomination of WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, for President, and JOHN TYLER, for Vice-President; and to pledge myself to support the nomination to the utmost of my power and ability. The first of the nominees is a citizen of the State of Ohio, distinguished as an enlightened and patriotic statesman; an incorruptible man and high souled well tried soldier. The other is a favorite son of the ancient dominion, equally fit to be President, and only inferior to Gen. Harrison, in the degree and magnitude of his public services.

The nomination of such candidates, was worthy of the high minded and patriotic men, who formed a large majority of the delegates to the National Convention at Harrisburgh; they were emphatically the conscript fathers of the republic; time worn, honored for their public services—wise and single hearted; they had assembled to determine how best they might serve the cause of a much injured country, and effectually snatch the reins of government from the polluted hands of spoils-men and demagogues, who had driven rough shod over a betrayed and suffering people; honest in their intentions and wise in their conclusions—such men could make no mistake in the candidates presented by them to the nation. Accordingly the nominees of that convention have been received with enthusiasm and entire unanimity, by the Whigs and Conservatives of the Union; and I predict, gentlemen, that they will be elected by a majority so great, as to astonish alike friends and foes.

By no citizens, is the nomination of Gen. Harrison more warmly supported, than by the friends of Gen. Scott in this state; it is known to many of you, and it was well understood at Harrisburgh, that several of the State officers at Albany, through their friends, zealously pressed on the Convention the nomination of Gen. Scott as the most available candidate, and persevered until success was hopeless. The delegates from this state, friendly to the nomination of Gen. Scott, then threw

their ballots for Gen. Harrison and decided the question. So far they have fairly sustained the nomination, and set a magnanimous example of devotion to the great cause of the people, worthy of all praise, and which cannot fail to produce the happiest results.

The friends of Henry Clay in the Convention, adhered to him to the last ballot, with a perseverance befitting their warm hearts and his great name; and when a majority declared for Wm. Henry Harrison, and Mr. Clay's letter to his Kentucky friends was read, the magnanimity of soul displayed by those friends, the burning zeal, the unfeigned grief, and the devoted love exhibited by them in the outpourings of their glowing and impassioned eloquence, when they yielded Kentucky's favorite son to the will of the majority, to promote *Union for the sake of the Union*, surpass my power of description, and were worthy of the brightest and purest days of the republic. I esteem it, gentlemen, one of the happiest events of my life, that I was permitted to be present at the deliberations of the convention from the commencement to the end; but the thrilling scene of the last day, was an exhibition of self-devotion, patriotic feeling and stirring oratory, that had no parallel in the proceedings of any deliberative assembly I ever attended, and would embellish the brightest pages ever written by Milton and Hume. I returned from Harrisburgh more fixed in Republican principles than when I went, and more convinced of the permanency of our free institutions; that a nation which could produce on such an occasion, so many wise heads and honest hearts, contained within it the elements of restorative vitality, that would secure its existence for centuries; and as our origin and growth as a nation, may be regarded a series of miracles, betokening a special interposition of Providence in our behalf, so the evils we are now enduring, will, I firmly believe, be directed for our good; and from the hour the Pilgrim Fathers first set foot in America, at Plymouth, it was registered in the records of time kept in eternity, that from an insignificant and helpless infancy, this people should grow and wax strong for ages to come, until in the fulness of time they shall have attained the gigantic stature of a colossal nation; which, at some period in the far future, worn out with the wear and tare of twenty centuries, will run into decay and dissolve into its constituent elements; to form new combinations and assume new forms adapted to the wants and condition of its people.

I will not, gentlemen, detain this meeting with a detailed account of

the life and services of William Henry Harrison, they are to be found on the most interesting pages of the history of the country. It is in another light I desire to present him to your view—in the excellence of his private character—his domestic virtues—as well as his public services. Follow me at this moment to the banks of the Ohio, a few miles from the city of Cincinnati, on a few hundred acres of land, his only property, in a plain looking but convenient dwelling-house, engaged probably at this hour in reading, his daily practice after the business of the farm is disposed of; allow me who have a short personal acquaintance with him, to present you to a man in the plain dress of a substantial farmer, about 66 years old, but looking ten years younger, erect in stature, and a little above the ordinary height, with a pleasing mild countenance and military air, his manners courteous, his disposition frank, generous and hospitable, and a general favorite with his neighbors and acquaintances; he has been engaged all day in the labors of his farm to support himself and a large family, a portion of which is composed of the widows of three of his sons, with eight children; the people of Hamilton county, in which he lives, have bestowed on him the office of clerk of the county, the emoluments of which he appropriates to the support of his married children with numerous offspring; that man is William Henry Harrison, the *Farmer* of North Bend and the *Hero* of Tippecanoe and the Thames, who has served his country better and received less credit for it, than any other man now living in America. Suppose at this interview, some distinguished subject of her Brittanic majesty, say the Duke of Wellington were present, and should hear this statement: that plain dressed, modest looking farmer has fought more battles without losing one, than any other citizen of this republic; he has been Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Secretary of State, Governor, Major General and Commander, Foreign Minister, Representative and Senator in Congress; he has disbursed millions of the public money and purchased millions of acres of land for the United States, without appropriating one dollar or one cent to his own use. By his victories over the Indians and in thirteen different treaties, he acquired for his country, more territory than is contained in England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland united. In 1811, a general confederacy of the Indians against the whites, from the Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, was projected and nearly consummated by Tecumseh, a celebrated Indian prophet and warrior. Gen. Harrison discovered it in time, and

rapidly collecting what forces were at hand, he took the field and encountered a superior army of Indians at Tippecanoe, conquered and dispersed them—thus preserving the states of Ohio and Indiana, from the murderous consequences of a general war with savages.

Two years afterwards, he was besieged at Fort Meigs in Ohio, by a force of British and Indians; their repeated attacks he defeated and at last compelled them to retire. This success, he shortly after followed up in a campaign planned by himself with consummate skill and foresight, and which was eminently successful, both on Lake Erie and by land, he forced the enemy to retreat from the American territory—recaptured Detroit, which had been disgracefully surrendered by Gen. Hull; pursued the enemy into Canada, and at the decisive battle of the Thames, overcame a large force of British and Indians, compelling the former to surrender and killing or entirely dispersing the latter.—Having thus cleared the District under his command, being about one fourth of the Union, of its foes, flushed with victory, he tendered the strength of his name and his invaluable services to the baffled and disgraced army of the Niagara frontier; the Secretary at War was there in person—Harrison was received by him with the scowl of official arrogance—his offer was rejected and he was ordered to Ohio, where his previous gallantry had left no duty to be performed—he obeyed—but immediately after reaching his command, resigned his commission of Major General, declaring he would not eat the bread of idleness, and would *not draw pay when he could render no service.*

What I ask, gentlemen, would have been the probable answer of the Wellington to such a statement of facts? Would it not have been, that the British people would consider the neglect of a gallant and victorious General, a stigma on the nation? That had any British subject rendered to his country half the services performed by Wm. Henry Harrison, he would have been raised to the Peerage—his name ennobled—a splendid fortune assigned to him and his heirs forever—and he would have ranked second only to Royalty itself. This is most true, gentlemen, the neglect of Gen. Harrison is a national reproach; but it is not yet too late to atone for it. The genius and spirit of free institutions forbid the granting of fortune and pensions for public services; but as the free will offering of a grateful people, we can elevate Wm. H. Harrison *above royalty itself*, by electing him President of fifteen

millions of freemen, by the voluntary and unbought suffrages of a large majority of them.

Gen. Harrison has declared, through his friends, that if elected, he will serve but one term of four years; thus giving in his own person, a practical illustration of what is meant by rotation in office: if the example is followed out in the national and state governments, and the incumbents of all offices except judicial, changed at stated periods, we may then expect a faithful discharge of the duties of each office for the good of the people, instead of a party; polities will cease to be followed as a trade, because the tenure of office will be too short to furnish an inducement to abandon the certainty of private emolument to obtain it; office-holders will then no longer form a patrician class, into whose hands the honors and emoluments of the government are perpetually flowing without change; they will no longer serve as a Pretorian Band, ready to execute the will of their political leaders, right or wrong, on condition that they are continued in office *for life*, if the party so long continue; the debasing and corrupt effects in this state of the office for life holding system, by rotating from one office to another, had become so manifest and insufferable, that I am persuaded hundreds of the old Regency party were induced, in the end, to throw their ballots against their friends, as the only means of getting rid of the standing *candidates* and the *everlasting incumbents* of the party; *the signs of the times are indicative of the certain fall of any party, that will not establish and carry out a well regulated system of rotation in office.*

Since the nomination, by the National Convention, has been announced, and within a few days, President Van Buren has issued his annual message. He opens that message by informing the nation, "that although the past year has not been one of unalloyed prosperity, in consequence of the ravages of fire and disease, and serious embarrassments yet deranging the trade of *many* of our large cities, yet the *general prosperity*, which has been heretofore so bountifully bestowed upon us by the Author of all good, still continues to call for our warmest gratitude."

Can the President be sincere, or does he mean to mock us in our distresses? I deny that general prosperity prevails in our land; on the contrary I assert, and I appeal to the experience of every man who hears me, for the truth of it, that nine-tenths of the industrious classes of the people, are suffering more in mind, means and estate, than a

general war of six years duration could have inflicted, save only in the loss of life; produced by the wanton and rash experiments of the President on the business and currency of the country, to carry out the impracticable and destructive dogmas of John C. Calhoun and Thomas H. Benton, as a reformed system of political economy, but actually intended by them to impair the resources and cripple the energies of that section of the Union, which they hate for no other provocation, than because the God of nature has allotted to it a finer climate and better harbors, a more numerous, active and laborious population, who have built larger cities and improved fairer lands than the south can produce.

History informs us, that during an almost general conflagration of the city of Rome, kindled by order of the Emperor Nero, whilst the houses of its citizens, the palaces of its nobles, and the temples of its gods, were crumbling into ashes beneath the devouring element, the tyrant merrily played on his violin; and amidst the groans of suffering men and the lamentations of agonized women and children, he coolly remarked to his guards, "that they would now feel what the power of an Emperor was."

It must be in some such spirit, that the President discourses of the general prosperity of the nation, amidst the ruined fortunes and blasted prospects of thousands; the bitter fruits of the wild theory and rash practice of him and his predecessor. Let him visit our principal cities, and behold the sad effects of stagnated commerce, bankrupt merchants, closed ware houses, sheriff's sales, empty workshops, and their occupants standing idle and listless at the corner of the streets; and day laborers returning pennyless to their starving wives and children, to go supperless to bed. Then let him turn to the interior of the country and observe the losses sustained by the sudden depreciation in the value of real and personal property, and the ruinous sacrifices submitted to, when a sale of it must be made; the want of confidence, the loss of credit and privations and disappointments, consequent on an almost total suspension in the payment of debts, arising from the want of a sufficient circulating medium; and let him, if he can dream of the general prosperity, and if he is honest, we must look upon him as bereft of his senses, and if dishonest, as the veriest hypocrite and deceiver on earth.

In my view, gentlemen, the message is a series of incongruities, if not contradictions; it speaks of general prosperity, when general distress notoriously prevails, which the whole tenor of the message pre-

supposes ; it censures the excessive importation of merchandize—yet cautiously omits to recommend the only measure that can remedy the evil, a protective tariff of duties ; that would encourage and promote the substitution of American for foreign manufactures, and thus prevent the exportation of the precious metals to pay for the latter. The President is opposed to a national currency furnished by a National Bank, in bills and amounts suited to the wants of the people ; a currency which was at all times available to its holder, in every commercial nation on earth, where the stars and stripes of the national flag were seen at the mast head, or the commerce of the Union was desired ; yet he recommends a national Sub-Treasury Bank, to be made up of government dues paid in coin, which can only be obtained from our State Banks, and which must of course close them ; to be in the hands of officers appointed by himself and removable at his pleasure ; whose fidelity is to be secured by the terms of a felon's fate, as if that spectre could deter dishonest men from following in the footsteps of their illustrious predecessors.

As the President, gentlemen, has some grounds from past experience, for suspecting the integrity of his intended Sub-Treasurers, we would advise him to insist upon their putting on the ball and chain in advance, or they may avoid his lock up penalties, by a jaunt to Texas ; that Gretna Green of this continent, where I foresee, if the Sub-Treasury goes into operation, the happy alliances contracted between its officers and the Treasuries in their keeping, will often be solemnized for life ; when a Sub-Treasurer *slopes* off, it will no longer be said of him, G. T. T. gone to Texas, but that he has made a *run away* match with an Heiress, worth \$200,000.

And this Sub-Treasury Bank is to issue bills of exchange, when the President pleases, and if he pleases, for sums to suit the convenience of his Sub-Treasurers. He is opposed to the mixed currency of paper and coin, issued by our Banking institutions, and yet proposes no substitute, but the exploded humbug of gold and silver, which he admits cannot be retained in the country, when he asserts that we are more indebted to Europeans than we can readily pay ; that our stocks are valueless and our coin exported by the agents of foreign houses, for the manufactures sold by them at auction.

There is not, gentlemen, in the message a single proposition worthy of the comprehensive, enlightened and practical policy looked for, from

an American statesman ; its whole scope and bearing seems to be, to break down every business pursuit of the people, by diminishing the already reduced circulating medium of the country, and to depreciate the value of every kind of property, by making one dollar perform the office of ten dollars of our present mixed currency ; a result which the people will never sanction, unless they are greater blockheads than I believe them to be.

For nothing is Mr. Van Buren more censurable, than for connecting himself with the Fanny Wright men, Agrarians and Infidels of the north—the avowed enemies of all the civil and religious institutions of the country, and with the nullifiers of the south, the advocates of a separation of the southern states from the northern ; and of every measure injurious to the commerce and industry of the north, who support him because he is a “northern man with southern principles”—which means a northern man, who lends himself to the malignants of the south, to “ruin the northern cities to build up those of the south.”—When the sky falls, gentlemen, we will catch larks ; when the same event occurs, the nullifiers, with Mr. Van Buren for leader, will accomplish our ruin ; the snake is scotched, his position is known, and they whom he seeks to strike, will avoid his spring by maintaining the right distance.

The nullifiers of the south are opposed to the protective Tariff, the great security against excessive importations, as the British Tariff is in that kingdom, an effectual security against the importation of northern products and manufactures, because it enhances the prices of manufactures and imposes an unequal burthen on the south to promote the manufactures of the north. The fallacy of these pretences a moment’s consideration will make manifest. The Tariff operates equally to promote the industry of all sections of the Union, which will avail themselves of it. Why does not the south erect manufacturing establishments. Experience has shown, that in proportion to the growth of American manufactures, the foreign has lessened in price. Within the last thirty years, hats which formerly cost eight to ten dollars can now be purchased for four or five dollars ; so with boots and shoes, and every other article in common use ; in cotton fabrics the price has been reduced some 150 per cent. ; and I firmly believe, that the large consumption of southern cotton by northern manufactures, induced by the encouragement afforded by a protective Tariff, by furnishing a home market,

has had a material agency in enhancing its price in Europe, which otherwise, would have been reduced to its minimum price, by a combination among European buyers, which has been attempted once or twice within the last three years.

It is clear, that the duties imposed by the Tariff laws, are paid by the consumers of imported goods, and they are comparatively few in the southern states. The state of New-York alone, with its 2,000,000 of white citizens, consumes more imports and of course pays more duties than the people of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee united, because two-thirds of their population consumes few or no imports at all. It is therefore manifest, that the northern and middle states, in which I include Virginia and Kentucky and the western free states, must actually defray nine-tenths of the expenses of the Union, besides supplying all the men who handle the bayonets of the army, and the sailors who man the guns and work the ships of the navy. But small as is the proportion paid by the southern states, it is still so much saved by the other states of the Union, which, in maintaining a national government, would be compelled to pay it, if separated from the southern states. But if the proportion now paid be so burthensome, how much greater would it not be to the southern states, if they paid the whole, to carry out Mr. Calhoun's notion of a southern confederacy, with him for President.

It is a remarkable fact, that even intelligent men of the southern states, hold lightly the advantages of belonging to a powerful nation, at comparatively small expense, able to protect them from foreign and domestic foes; they too often speak freely of a probable dissolution of the Union, which to them would prove ruinous; whilst northern men, from national attachment, shrink from the thought as sacrilege, and a dishonor to the memory of the great and good men who established it; nor is there any hostile interests actually existing that require a separation of the Union to adjust; the difference of climate and the consequent different productions, and the different pursuits of the people of the northern and southern states, by creating wants in one section that can be supplied in the other, so far from being a cause of separation, is certainly a bond of Union; and if we were all cotton or wheat growers, or all manufacturers, we would interfere much more with each other than we do now. But the people of the northern states cannot exist without a protective system to sustain their own industry. I have

already shown that the middle, and western, and northern states, pay nine-tenths of the expense of such a system, and that the south receives a fair equivalent for the one-fifth she actually contributes ; the north can therefore justly insist upon the adoption of a system of which she pays the expense ; but if our southern brethren are inflexible on this head, and to enhance the value of the productions of their slave labor, are determined to prostrate and crush the industrious classes of the north, by a continuance of the present deplorable suicidal policy of the government ; it is apparent that, however we might deprecate a dissolution of the Union, the northern, and middle, and western states, would lose no advantages that would not be counter-balanced by a system of trade, founded on these cardinal principles :

1. That the gold and silver of America, must not be exported to pay for the labor of foreign artizans and manufactures, but must be retained to foster, cherish and promote American labor and industry.
2. That these states will trade with no people, whose government will not admit into its ports, the manufactures and products of America, on the same terms and with the same duties, that the United States admit theirs.

These principles, if adopted as the rule of our commercial intercourse with the nations of the earth, would make the American people the wealthiest, as they are the most industrious and enterprising, on the globe.

An adherence to the latter principle, I deem essential to the existence of the grain growing and manufacturing states ; and will secure a market for their surplus products, which are now valueless in the ports of Great Britain, from whom we purchase millions in value of manufactures, the staple products of their labor ; yet unwisely permit that nation to exclude from her markets our labor ; thus making our money capital tributary to their labor—a system that must impoverish any people. It is a proof of the wonderful resources of the free states, that their people have been able to bear up until 1837, against the ruinous consequences of this policy. Up to that period, our industry had been promoted and sustained by the aliment of a superior national currency, operating to stimulate navigation and commerce to the highest pitch ; but since 1837, the mischievous effects of breaking down that currency, have developed themselves in crippling our commerce and navigation and diminishing our labor, and of course our resources ; the immense balances due to our European creditors, are producing their

natural effects ; payment is called for and our coin is departing with every packet ; this state of things can be endured no longer ; the people of the free states must combine to consume no foreign manufactures, or the policy of the Government must be changed.

In matters of trade and commerce, effecting the interest of each individual, there should be no politics ; the people of the northern, middle and western states have nine-tenths of the numerical strength of the nation ; they have but to will it and the right principles will be adopted. Nor is this meant to injure in any particular, the cotton growing states ; I am sure, that I do but echo the sentiments of nineteen twentieths of the people of this state, when I assert, that any attempt to interfere with the domestic institutions of those states, or any invasion of their constitutional rights, would be put down by an expression of public opinion too decided to require the application of any other power.

The course pursued by President Van Buren, of enlisting himself on the side of the visionary and impracticable men of the south, and appealing to the worst passions of the worst men for support, instead of commanding himself to the judgment and affections of the intelligent and patriotic, have lost him the confidence and support of his best friends ; his defeat is now morally certain, and he will be succeeded by a great and good man, upon whose honesty and capacity we can all rely, and who will not fail to give to the country the repose it so much needs.

For the reasons I have assigned, I pledge myself to oppose the re-election of Martin Van Buren—I enlist for the whole war—will you not also ? In your animated countenances and warm applause, I read your assent.

Here then we unfurl the standard of the Union, its broad folds expanding in the air ; its stars waving to the breeze ; on its broad canvass we inscribe for our motto, "our country, our whole country"—"union for the sake of the Union"—under this emblem of the nation's independence, its pride and chivalry have often rallied to maintain its rights ; many a gallant spirit has triumphed in victory, and many a proud heart beat its last throb for honor and the country ; will you at this crisis withhold your aid in the same great cause, to be maintained through the ballot boxes ? Perish the thought ; and perish the man, who when his country calls him to defend her rights or nobly sink, who then to duty dead, can shrink aghast, and will hold counsel with abject fear.



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